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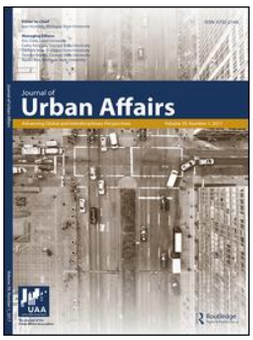

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of Chinese cities has engendered new forms of spatialized urban inequality. Research on these processes of segregation has captured the attention of urban researchers, generating a large and varied body of work. Yet its influence on urban theory remains constrained, reflecting the concern with the parochialism of urban theory. A review of segregation research on Chinese cities presents several intertwined findings: Chinese cities are framed in terms of their difference, mostly in contrast to Euro-American cities. This framing renders findings intelligible for an audience familiar with Chicago, but perhaps not Shenzhen. In translating the findings, the research often resorts to a methodological nationalism, which contextualizes Chinese cities in terms of their "Chinese-ness," a reductionist heuristic that elides the diversity of these cities and construes residential segregation as incommensurate with the experience of cities elsewhere. The effect of this is to limit the potential of this research to contribute to a "more global urban studies," by inscribing a kind of exceptionalism into Chinese cities.

Introduction

An enormous body of research has been generated about the way that space is being transformed in Chinese cities (W. Chen, 2006; Feng et al., 2011; Gao et al., 2017; Hu, 2015; Li et al., 2009; Li & Wu, 2006a; Lin, 2007; Lin & Zhang, 2015; Logan, 2011; Ma, 2002; Shen, 2007; D. Wang & Zhou, 2017; L. Zhang, 2008). Like many places experiencing the commodification of land and property, and the transition from state-owned socialist systems, this restructuring is closely related to new forms of inequality (Gu & Shen, 2003; He & Wu, 2009; Hu & Kaplan, 2001; Huang, 2005; Huang & Jiang, 2009; Y. Liu & Wu, 2006; Shin, 2016; Trubina et al., 2020; Wu, 2004; F. Wu & Webster, 2010; Q. Wu et al., 2014; Yeh et al., 2015). Urgent attention is being paid to the issue of urban inequality for cities around the world, from broad analyses of variegated capitalism (Peck & Theodore, 2007) to the exigence of uneven everyday experiences of urban sanitation (McFarlane et al., 2014). Spatialized urban inequality grows in China and beyond as a pressing matter for policy and research. Though "Chinese cities are emerging in multiple senses" (Wu, 2016, p. 338), the research on spatial inequality in Chinese cities has not served as a spring of urban theory and largely remains within the purview of area specialization (Jazeel, 2016). The goal of this paper is to decipher why this mountain of empiricism has not been accompanied by a concomitant torrent of theoretical development by problematizing the function of exceptionalism in research on segregation in Chinese cities.

This aim reflects a concern within urban studies, particularly for researchers of the majority world, about the bifurcation of theory and empiricism (McFarlane, 2008; Ren, 2015; Robinson, 2002). This bifurcation highlights the ways that some places remain the sites of theory and others as case studies; in

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writing about "southern cities," Mary Lawhon and Lené Le Roux explain that "for the most part, the south is considered exemplar or exception rather than a source of urban geographical theory" (Lawhon & Roux, 2019, p. 1261; see also Jazeel, 2016; Roy, 2009). Concentrating on the history of urban studies might dismiss this bifurcation as a remnant of disciplinary origins, recalling Edward Said's critique of geography as a discipline of empire, instrumentalized for the purpose of rule (1993). Yet the reasons for this trenchant bifurcation surely involve a multitude of overlapping factors from institutional legacies of authority (Oswin, 2019) to developmentalist fallacies (Robinson, 2003) or the conflation of difference with variation (Roy, 2016), rendering a simple answer untenable. The purpose of addressing this question, however, highlights the labor demanded of researchers outside the canon to translate their findings in "terms of theory built elsewhere" (Bhan, 2019, p. 641; Oswin, 2018).

This review of segregation research on cities in China reveals three interconnected findings. Chinese cities are framed in terms of their difference, mostly in contrast to Euro-American cities. Researchers of Chinese cities do this in order to make findings intelligible for a particular audience; this translating labor is evidenced in "other" geographies as well (Oswin, 2018; Parnell & Pieterse, 2016), but here it can be additionally characterized by its methodological nationalism. The effect is to limit the potential contributions of this research to urban theory by inscribing Chinese cities with a kind of exceptionalism.

Approach

In reviewing segregation research on cities in China, I focus on research conducted about segregation, not segregation itself. Inspired by Niklas Luhmann's idea of the second-order observer (1995), I don't identify the drivers of segregation, but rather the methods of the segregation researcher. Although indebted to Brenda Madrazo and Ronald van Kempen's (2012) overview of "urban socio-spatial segregation" in China, the focus here is more on how segregation is being researched rather than the various forces behind segregation.[1] Favoring an epistemological over an ontological approach toward reviewing segregation is certainly not intended to diminish the significance of segregation. Rather, it is due to the concerning proliferation of segregation in Chinese cities that such a profound body of research has been generated, making the question of theorization even more prevalent.

While the questions driving this paper transcend China, I focus on Chinese cities to make these broader critiques of the geography of urban theory (Jazeel, 2016; Leitner & Sheppard, 2016; Robinson, 2011; Roy, 2009) more specific. As the parochialism of urban theory is scrutinized and new tasks are being laid out (Jazeel, 2016; Robinson & Roy, 2016), there is an increased need for understanding the barriers to theory-building across different contexts. Despite the contentious debates around urban theorization, there is some consensus that urban theory doesn't adequately attend to the global urban experience and remains Eurocentric in universalizing from a limited set of urban experiences (cf. Scott & Storper, 2015; Storper & Scott, 2016; Roy, 2016). Though this problem has been dismissed by some scholars as "obvious," it remains less evident how to best remediate the situation, particularly in discussion with Asian cities (Bunnell et al., 2012; Ren & Luger, 2015). It is not just the lack of empirical knowledge or attention to cities outside of the Eurocentric heartlands of theory; this is excessively evident when considering the vast scholarship on cities in China (Forrest et al., 2019). It seems, therefore, an excellent starting point to investigate the barriers to theorization.

Predominantly sourced from academic journals and edited book volumes, the reviewed segregation research dates from the post-reform period of roughly the past 20 years is available in the form of a scoping report (Ren, 2016). An attempt was made to consider both English and Chinese language publications. Though the references do not serve as a perfectly representative sample of the research published in these two languages, it is noteworthy that most researchers cited have published in both languages, so a clear delineation is difficult to establish. Moreover, the heightened pressure to publish in international English language journals for all English as an additional language (EAL) scholars complicate this delineation (Luo & Hyland, 2019). No claims are made about the categorical differences between the nature of research produced in different languages, published in different venues,

originating from different institutions or disciplines, or funded by different sources, though an STS perspective would surely be fruitful.[2]

Claiming difference

Attempting to understand and explain the speed and scope of urban transformation in China, researchers often produce data and models that highlight their difference from elsewhere. Shenjing He and Junxi Qian (2017) argue that the over-reliance on empiricism and econometric modeling has led to a "lack of analytical nuance and theoretical reflection" in research about cities in China (p. 828). One way to understand the lack of theoretical reflection is to consider how this data and these models are historically contextualized in segregation research.

Contextualization is perhaps best characterized by its overextended, multiple functions. Context serves at times to facilitate the intelligibility of the empirical research, but context is also presented as explanation for the findings. Because of the complexity summarizing decades of Chinese urban history, scholars have resorted to intricate diagrams to help aid in this explanation. Especially in studies about housing segregation in Chinese cities, a diagram of the urban transformation like Figure 1 is often included as context. Figure 1 attempts to show how different forms of housing inequality and residential patterns are formed as a result of socialist institutions and market mechanisms. Thus, they connect the forms of inequality evident in the *danwei* housing systems (employer-based provision of housing) to new forms of inequality driven by market mechanisms like selling off or trading up housing options. The figure functions to both contextualize inequality within existing institutions and explain the many drivers—market mechanisms, migration, employee and household behavior.

An alternative offering of a similar story by Zhigang Li and Fulong Wu (2006b, p. 700) in Figure 2 shows another model of complex urban processes relating to a number of actors, institutions and scales of analysis. Both Figures 1 and 2 attempt to capture the massive transformation relating to where

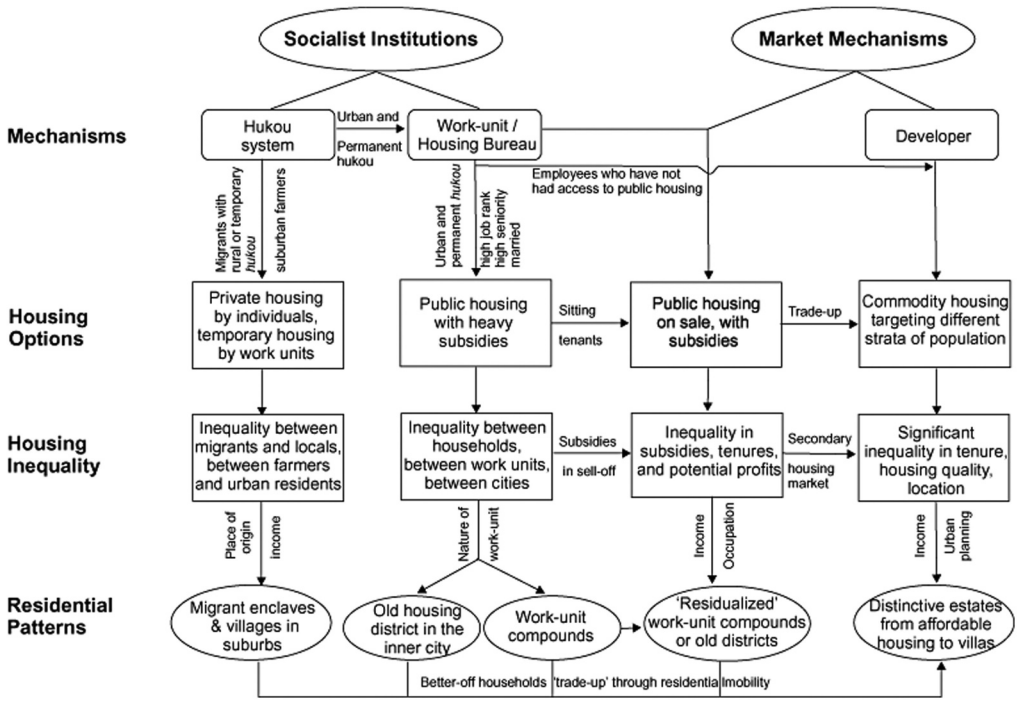

Figure 1. Housing inequality and residential segregation in transitional Chinese cities (Huang & Jiang, 2009, p. 938).

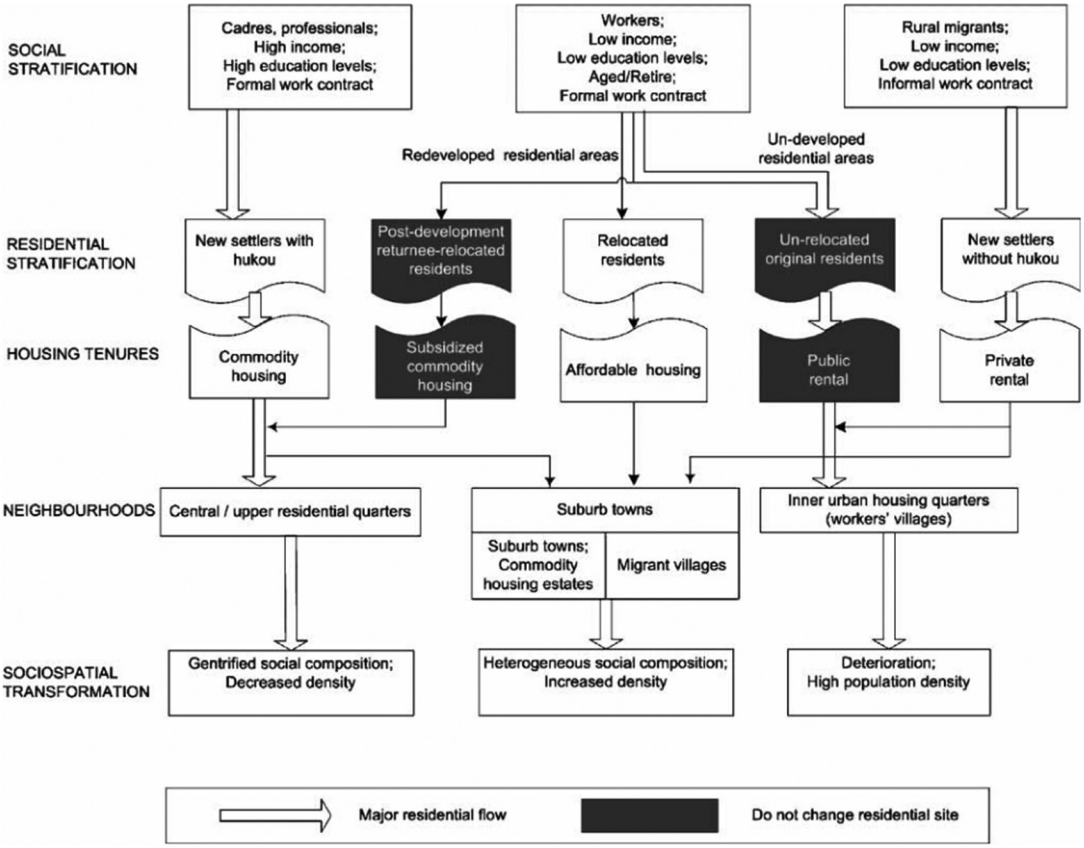

Figure 2. Residential restructuring in post-reform urban China (Li & Wu, 2006b, p. 700).

people live in Chinese cities, and the new forms of spatialized inequality that result from the interconnected changes underway. Both seek to simultaneously explain the context of pre- and post-reform China, the reformation process (ie. commodification of housing, changing options and social groups), and the resulting socio-spatial inequalities. In other words, context serves here as both background and explanation for the changes underway, flattening the various drivers as equal players in the field (ie. migrant villages alongside distinctive villa estates).

Considering the many functions of Figures 1 and 2, it also becomes clear that in order to understand "migrant villages" in China, a review of *hukou* and housing access remains a necessary precursor. Many introductions to China's urban transformation are available by key scholars like Fulong Wu, Shenjing He, George C.S. Lin, often at the outset of research on issues like enclaves, poverty, land reform. These introductions turn the research on cities in China at least in part a review of 20th century Chinese history.

In addition to these contextualizing introductions, an approach often taken in framing the research is to present a "Chinese case" against a "Western" model of segregation. Such an approach might adopt an indicator for how something is measured in the "West" and invalidate it for the Chinese case. It reflects an emerging pattern of an "'uncomfortable theoretical fit' between theories and concepts derived from the West and the urban realities of China and India" (Ren, 2018, p. 504). For instance, F. Wu (2010) begins with "suburban residential development in the West" in order to show how it is inadequate to explain "Chinese suburban residential development." These empirical studies establish the Chinese case as an illustrative variation of an established concept or theory of post-socialist transition, serving to both validate the choice in topic and position the research within a broader

"Western" literature (See e.g., Hu & Kaplan, 2001; Li & Wu, 2006a; Ma, 2002; Q. Wu et al., 2014; L. Zhang, 2008; Zhou & Ma, 2000). The result of this framing is to ensure the incommensurability of cities in China, often with an oversimplified version of the "West." The "West" performs a function, not as a model of desirability, but rather serving still as a structure of knowledge to explain (Hall, 2018).

Alongside these claims of difference in terms of historical context or in contrast to an oversimplified notion of the "West," there is also a notable assertion that segregation in China should be seen as complex and not as inevitable. In discussing gated communities, Choon-Piew Pow argues that it is neither an inevitable transplantation of western neoliberalism, nor a natural element of traditional Chinese cities or "collectivist culture" (Huang, 2006):

> To explain away the modern gating phenomenon in contemporary Chinese cities as the product of immutable cultural tradition or social norm is clearly to ignore the complexities of urban change and its underlying social-cultural processes. (Pow, 2009, p. 5)

Unlike Youqin Huang, who argues that gated communities reflect a kind of social solidarity distinct from the "West" (2006), Pow believes that this claim presents gating as an inevitability, an enduring cultural element rather than the outcome of urban change (2009). These reflections about the nature of gating in urban China is echoed to some extent by Shenjing He in her discussion of enclaves (2013), which she contends cannot be explained away as part of a universal phenomenon of some common condition. Rather, He advocates for a more "historical and context-specific approach to understanding China's enclave urbanism beyond Western paradigms" (He, 2013, p. 5). These positions about gating and enclaves represent an important issue inherent in much of the research on segregation in Chinese cities: what is the function of the Chinese context? These scholars do not believe in the simple transplantation of "western" concepts of neoliberalism as an explanation for gated communities or enclaves. While Huang and He seek to explain the contemporary condition of gating and enclaves through a presentation of historical trajectory, cultural tradition and urban forms, Pow suggests that this kind of explanation risks serving as "culturalist" justifications for "gating up" (2009, p. 5). Thus, the function of context seems here not only about identifying the risk of "imposing an inappropriate way of seeing" (Garrido et al., 2020, p. 2) but also the normative consequences of these ways of seeing.

This is a struggle evident in much of the research on segregation, which straddles the approach to context as a descriptive frame or as a setting for urban stratification concerned with the normative implications of inequality. For instance, in research about forms of segregation resulting from relocation policies, there are more descriptive approaches detailing the displacement and compensation schemes for moving residents, analyzing them as a planning practice to identify issues like shortages and mixed income integration (Feng & Long, 2006; Jiao, 2007). Researching the same phenomenon, other scholars take a more critical or normative perspective that highlights the mechanisms of power at first instigating dispossession and how this form of segregation results in residential areas with inadequate access to public services (Shin, 2016; Q. Wang, 2013). New forms of segregation also result from the reforms forcing local governments to commodify land and housing, and the complex chain of events, institutions and interests as depicted in Figures 1 and 2 (See also Lin & Zhang, 2015; T. Liu & Lin, 2014). By relying on historical context and narratives of reform to explain segregation, however, there is a danger in justifying these trajectories of growing inequality.

Indeed, the structural explanation often negates, or at least minimizes the role of various drivers, whether it is the emergence of differences in lifestyle and income (Hu & Kaplan, 2001; Liu & Li, 2009), forms of class or residential mobility (Li, 2004; L. Zhang, 2010), or even the significance of segregated communities in meeting the specific needs of rural migrants (Song et al., 2008). Even the research more attuned to an actor-centered approach is concerned with explaining the setting: growing resource disparity, social differentiation (See e.g., Jiang & Li, 2012; Xie & Jiang, 2011), and the changing "structure of opportunities" that households face:

> Where a household lives is not just a function of its 'residential preference' but also is shaped by the structure of opportunities that it faces. The structure of opportunities facing the poor in Chinese cities was for most created

> a long time ago, and in a way the reform has the effect of amplifying some of those structural effects. Urban poverty in China is very much rooted in the institution of hierarchical resource allocation in the centrally planned era. The entitlements including rights to housing, location, employment, and welfare services inherited from the prereform era are the new starting line from which the unequalising tendencies of market-based exchange (and market-shaped cities) will grow. (F. Wu et al., 2010, pp. 149–150)

In short, the forms of resource allocation from the pre-reform era predetermined certain inequalities. Claiming these path dependencies as the reason for contemporary forms of segregation grants historical context an additional importance. Yet by grounding the explanation for segregation in Chinese cities within this structural analysis of larger processes, it minimizes the role of social groups in defining different residential areas. So, if segregation is evidenced through indicators along lines of class, ethnicity, citizenship status, work, then it is often through the discussion of the macro-level changes at the national scale that have an impact on economic class, migration, legal *hukou* reform or the reform of the *danwei* structure. If segregation is evidenced in the built environment through the materiality of buildings, walls and infrastructures, then it serves as a reflection of wider explanations of cultural tradition, commodification or socialist transition.

Understanding the way context functions therefore not only renders cities in China incommensurate with other cities, but it also renders these experiences of urban segregation particularly Chinese. The extent to which this contextual specificity is necessary to make the research intelligible, and the extent to which this serves to isolate the research in its own parochial canon raises a central concern for urban theory-making (Ren & Luger, 2015).

Audience

Evident in this research is pressure to interpret the Chinese experience for a "broader" audience. The role of audience perhaps explains why it is necessary to claim difference from "the West," as a way of explaining through contrasting. Considering the issue of audience also helps to better understand the barriers to theorization. The intellectual labor asked of urban researchers outside the heartlands of urban theory to relate their work to established canons, or make their research intelligible for a broader audience reflects some of the entrenched hierarchies within the discipline (Bhan, 2019; Oswin, 2018, 2019). In part, this requires an understanding of the "privilege of thinking and speaking in the language of '"theory"' (Zeiderman, 2018, p. 1117). Perhaps the language of theory precludes the reading of certain forms of research as theoretical, or perhaps the demands on interpreting research is not everywhere the same. Given the rich body of work being produced on cities in China, it should be surprising that researchers continue to speak from the "urban shadows" of theory (McFarlane, 2008).

At the International Conference on Urban China Development 2017 in London, Jon Bannister issued a plea to the plenary to help get more mainland Chinese researchers published. Bannister expressed his disappointment that submissions from mainland China were being disproportionately rejected by the journal he edited, which had a lot to do with interpreting the broader theoretical relevance of the research. This begs the question: relevance for whom?

Could his journal audience in turn be asked to try to read research about cities in China as theoretically relevant? In *Asia as Method*, Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010) makes the argument that decolonizing work cannot depend solely on the colonized, but also on the "colonizer's deimperialization," and, in terms of knowledge production and consumption, depends on "collective will, interaction, and effort" (p. 24). It builds on Gayatri Spivak's critique of a "mute audience," as a receptacle for which the subaltern speaker is responsible (1999). Indeed, postcolonial literature offers guidance on the issue of translation into dominant languages, as a mode of cultural domination and erasure (Spivak, 2012; Thiong'o, 1992). Translation work is laden with uneven relationships, often distributing the labor of understanding unevenly.

The research designs positing the Chinese case against a non-Chinese model or contextualizing segregation research through socialist market transition are ways to make the research not only relevant but also intelligible to an audience beyond China. It seems to be speaking to an audience

largely unfamiliar with the details of Chinese economic reform, and must do the introduction work of recounting decades of reform history. The belabored diagrams trying to explain massive societal and economic transformation at multiple scales (Figures 1 and 2) are not required of research on all cities.

These flow charts and contextual detail, the descriptive labor demanded of Chinese researchers leave an imprint of empiricism (He & Qian, 2017), difficult to escape. As Natalie Oswin (2018) has bemoaned, "I am tired of translating the insights of queer theory for a broader critical urban studies audience. I am tired of having to make a case for sexuality's rightful place on critical urban theory's map" (p. 544). The labor of addressing this "broader" audience and convincing them of what belongs as a part of urban theory is not only exhausting, it also risks sidelining certain forms of urban research to the margins of the discipline. The danger of new parochial canons, particularly with cities in China, looms large.

Exceptionalism

In claiming difference and with an audience in mind, the research on segregation in Chinese cities often resorts to methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). The segregation experiences of vastly different cities are framed and explained in terms of China as nation-state or with Chinese characteristics. This becomes evident in the reviewed literature for the prevalence of "urban China" or "Chinese cities" or the "Chinese case" (F. Wu et al., 2010) in titles rather than the actual names of specific Chinese cities. It is also evident through the function of comparative studies of particular cities, which serve to represent something about Chinese urbanism (See e.g., Forrest et al., 2019; Li & Wu, 2013; Ren, 2019). In other words, Beijing, Shanghai or Nanjing (Q. Wu et al., 2014) stand in for Chinese cities rather than coastal cities, financial centers or direct municipalities.[3]

The predominance of nation-state framings in social science research is a well-established concern (See also Agnew, 1994). The critiques of its analytic blunting apply to urban studies similarly; relying on the nation-state as a dominant frame is functionally reductive for understanding cities in China, often erasing their diversity by subsuming them all under the Chinese umbrella. The macro-level analysis of urban change rarely trespasses the nation-state frame. Discussions about the transition economy, for instance, are rarely connected to an analysis of the global context in which this transition is taking place (T. Liu & Lin, 2014),[4] but more often circumscribed to the national policies and reforms that shape this change. Spatialized inequality driven by urban migration that might be vastly different between mid-sized cities and major coastal cities is undifferentiated. The bias that research on mega-cities like Beijing, Shanghai, or Guangzhou is often taken to represent urban China elides the complexity of the urban Chinese experience, which also includes Taiyuan, Xiamen, or Ürümqi.

The function of this methodological nationalism has resulted in a kind of Chinese exceptionalism, situating this monolithic urban China as not only incommensurate but a special case outside the realm of theory. This is predominantly an epistemological issue that works in tandem with the empiricism (He & Qian, 2017), forestalling a more generous theoretical contribution to urban studies from the research on Chinese cities. The restrictive "bonds of 'Chinese exceptionalism'" has enjoyed an increased attention in geography (Buckingham, 2017, p. 297; see also Pow, 2012; Ren, 2019; J. Zhang, 2018), though this attention has not yet fully developed what exactly the nature of this exceptionalism is. In political science, the concept of exceptionalism is used to explain China's place in the world today, often presenting a legacy of influence and power that views China's rise in a context of an injustice or a historical mistake being corrected (Agnew, 2012; Xuetong, 2001). Particularly in the areas of policy and international relations, Chinese exceptionalism is often defined in contrast to American exceptionalism, "China is building its own road, following a model of Chinese exceptionalism that promotes global peace and harmony rather than what [is seen] as Pax America's incessant wars" (Callahan, 2012, p. 34). This "emerging exceptionalism," attached to global projects like the Belt Road Initiative (Narins & Agnew, 2020) is thus characterized by a benevolence, which is seen to facilitate a discursive legitimacy around Sinocentric hegemony (Callahan, 2012; J. Zhang, 2018).

At the same time, exceptionalism serves to essentialize a national Chinese identity, in line with contemporary policies aimed at minority groups in China that resist national incorporation (Bovingdon, 2010). Indeed, the benevolent, pacifist characterization of Chinese foreign policy is dramatically transmuted in its domestic policy. In what has been widely described as "ethnic cleansing" in 2018 in newspapers like the *Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, and Al Jazeera, and denounced as a genocide in 2021 (Editorial Board, 2018; Eve, 2018; Wong & Buckley, 2021), the suppression of minority groups' cultural and religious differences in Xinjiang marks the Janus-faced nature of Chinese exceptionalism; both a pacifist international engagement and a severe ethno-centrism domestically. The function of exceptionalism to characterize the policy of the Chinese nation-state as superior and to legitimize a singular Chinese identity serves to consequently impose a kind of Chinese world order—both politically and epistemologically.

The epistemological singularity of this worldview has reductive implications for urban research. As He et al. (2017) point out, "the rise of China has provided new opportunities and challenges for urban scholars to theorize and re-conceptualize China's renewed urbanism" (p. 635). They frame this urbanism in terms of its "scale and speed," which "have dwarfed those of other countries in the world" (He et al., 2017, p. 635, see also Ma, 2002). Perhaps, however, the "mesmerizing effects of scale" overstate the exceptional (Ren, 2019, p. 235; Ong, 2011), curtailing knowledge about both qualitative difference and the kind of theoretical engagement that remains insufficient (He et al., 2017; He & Qian, 2017). Choon-Piew Pow (2012) questions "what is lost or ignored by framing geographical inquiry and knowledge within such exceptionalist discourses"? (p. 47). Chinese exceptionalism prides itself on a particular view of its history, which reduces its research to a deterministic view of urbanization processes. In this narrative, cities in China are the way they are because they are Chinese.

In terms of segregation research, this circular reasoning results in a curious analytical finding: while the research is often designed to connect to a "broader" audience unfamiliar with urban China through its relation to other models of segregation and through its claims of difference, context is explained and utilized in such a way as to circumscribe the theoretical relevance of the research. This flattens the differences between Chinese cities and negates a more nuanced analysis of segregation, as it tries to make this research relevant for cities beyond China.

Some new approaches to researching Chinese cities offer innovative ways forward, which neither negate context nor employ context as a singular explanation. Yimin Zhao's approach to translation offers an alternative conceptual framing for rethinking what he terms "hypothetical equivalence" (2020). Taking an approach to translation that resists reproducing uneven patterns of translation noted above, Zhao considers the concept of "suburb" in relation to *jiehebu* by foregrounding a dialogue between these concepts rather than a one-directional form of translation. The issue of translation forms the basis of critical postcolonial scholarship on master narratives (see e.g., Bhaba, 2004; G. Spivak, 1988; G. C. Spivak, 1999), and with his approach to urban China, Zhao brings this overdue perspective to urban studies. That is, rather than evaluating urban China in "terms of theory built elsewhere," he evaluates the distances and the productive theoretical space between the terms themselves. It relates to a recent special issue "Toward a Global Urban Sociology: Keywords," which seeks to unsettle established understandings of keywords like segregation for cities in the Global South (Garrido et al., 2020; Ren, 2020). The theoretical innovation here is to consider the creative potential of translational spaces (Zhao, 2020) and inflection (Garrido et al., 2020) rather than a one-directional imposition or rejection of concepts.

Another approach situates urban China in comparative perspective, evaluating urban development financing in Shanghai in relation to Johannesburg and London (Robinson et al., 2020). In their selection of large-scale, long-term, multi-jurisdictional urban developments that entail transnational and trans-scalar governance, Robinson, Harrison, Shen and Wu place the three cities as equal partners in theorization. "Neither exceptions nor recipients of external theories, the cases of Shanghai and Johannesburg have informed our analysis of London" (Robinson et al., 2020, p. 3). Doing so, they present a more complicated finding with regards to the diversity of strategic goals and state interests. The "Chinese context" was not a passive backdrop nor explanatory force but rather was comprised of

a multiplicity of developer groups, institutions and actors. In differentiating these components of development financing, they conclude that emergent business models securing these kinds of urban developments can at times be at odds of national and metropolitan interests. While this is perhaps not a particularly novel finding, the framing of this research allows the cases of Shanghai, Johannesburg, and London to inform the analysis each other. This begins to fracture the predetermined categories of difference, and provide an alternative approach to taking the "West" as an "unproblematized benchmark" in which cities can be understood "without essential reference to the West" (Ong, 2011, p. 5).

Both these examples show that the barriers to making the experience of cities in China more theoretically relevant are not only the responsibility of urban China researchers to think beyond China. This task also relies on an academic audience prepared to understand *hukou* in theoretical terms of urban citizenship rather than an empirical anomaly of residency permits, or to think beyond the "suburb" and include considerations of *jiehebu* in studies of the urban periphery. Segregation research brings attention to the reductive function of Chinese exceptionalism in part by showing the rich breadth of urban concepts, and the ways they are not nationally bound.

The segregation researchers' findings may present theoretical insights into new forms of spatialized inequality relevant beyond China. Perhaps this research can contribute to the symbolic value of gated residential areas for residents with the power of residential choice (J. Wang & Lau, 2009; Wu, 2010), the temporally variant experiences of different kinds of migrants (Du & Li, 2010; Wu, 2002), and the ways that poverty is spatially concentrated (He et al., 2010; Wu, 2007). Segregation research can provide insight on cities in China as contested, diverse and unequal, reflecting an unstable urban landscape far from national goals of the homogenous society with zero poverty. These are insights that would demand a different kind of framing, a way of articulating research about urban China not preoccupied accommodating for an audience more familiar with Chicago than Shenzhen. Perhaps a "more global urban studies," also implies a more global reader.

Notes

1. For this review, segregation was defined by separated spaces of lived experience. In Madrazo and van Kempen's (2012) broad definition, "segregation refers to the processes of social differentiation and the resulting unequal distribution of population groups across space" (p. 159).
2. Similarly, no assumptions are made about the regional origins of the research, whether they are produced at institutions on the mainland, in Hong Kong or in/outside of Asia. Indeed, even a cursory consideration of the mobility of scholars whose work is included in the scoping report, the demands they are faced with in terms of publishing in both Chinese and English-language journals, and their own personal educational backgrounds and professional trajectories quickly helps to highlight why these categorical divisions might be grossly reductive. Still, an STS perspective might identify some qualitative differences, especially for pan- or inter-Asian comparative study (K.-H. Chen, 2010; Roy & Ong, 2011).
3. Direct-administered municipalities fall under the direct administration of the central government, and have the same governmental rank as provinces.
4. In a commentary about firm behavior, J. Zhang (2018) similarly argues for going beyond Chinese exceptionalism for a more territorially variegated approach to understanding economic globalization.

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